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ABSTRACT

This report describes the results of a series of studies examining changing beliefs concerning civil liberties among students attending several small colleges which differed dramatically in student characteristics, institutional goals, climate, teaching practices, and student-faculty relationships. The findings indicated that: (1) there was a net change toward increased liberalism, but that change was greater for men, and varied in magnitude from college to college; (2) moderate conservatives tended to become more liberal; and (3) moderate liberals most frequently became more conservative, though at some colleges they became more liberal. Institutional characteristics that were positively associated with increasing liberalism were: (1) the proportion of peers holding liberal beliefs; (2) study motivated by interests, concerns, or anticipated future activities; (3) student-faculty contact; and (4) student demonstrations concerning administrative policies or non-college issues. Institutional characteristics negatively associated with such change were: (1) the proportion of peers holding conservative beliefs; (2) college and student emphasis on professional-vocational preparation and propriety; (3) teaching practices that employ lecturing in class and memorizing for class preparation; and (4) study motivated by finishing a requirement or getting a good grade. (AF)

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CIVIL LIBERTIES AND THE EXPERIENCE OF COLLEGE[1]

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It is now almost axiomatic that students become more liberal during the college years. In 1962, summarizing research on attitudes and values, Webster, Freedman, and Heist said, "in general, students in college changed in the direction of greater liberalism and sophistication in their political, social, and religious outlooks."[2] Studies since then continue to support that generalization, as Feldman and Newcomb document in their recent comprehensive review.[3] But examining axioms can be productive. When Einstein was asked what prompted work on his theory of relativity, he replied, "I questioned an axiom." It turns out that the axiom concerning increased liberalism for college students also is worth questioning.

Research in higher education consistently has demonstrated that when all students are taken together net change is toward increased liberalism. But, in other areas, it also has been found that directions of change can differ when sub-groups of students are studied.[4] Net change for a large group and changes for sub-groups within it can be quite different. Despite the general trend toward liberalism, perhaps at some colleges liberal students become more conservative.

A recent series of studies examined changing beliefs concerning civil liberties among students attending several small colleges which differ dramatically in student characteristics, institutional goals, climate, teaching practices, and student-faculty relationships.[5] The studies focused on three questions answered by students as entering freshmen in 1965 and again at the

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[1]The research reported here was supported by Grant #14780-05, National Institute of Mental Health.

[2]H. Webster, M. B. Freedman, and Paul Heist, "Personality changes in college students," in The American College, edited by N. Sanford (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1962), p. 284.

[3]K. A. Feldman and T. M. Newcomb, The Impact of College on Students. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1969).

[4]See A. W. Chickering, "FD's and SD's - Neglected data in institutional research," Proceedings, Association for Institutional Research, Annual Forum. 1968; S. M. Corey, "Changes in the opinions of female students after one year at a university," Journal of Social Psychology, 11, 1940; and H. C. Finney, "Development and change of political libertarianism among Berkeley undergraduates," unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1967.

[5]For further information see A. W. Chickering, Education and Identity. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1969), and A. W. Chickering, J. McDowell, and D. Campagna, "Institutional differences and student development," Journal of Educational Psychology, (August, 1969).

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end of their sophomore year in spring, 1967. The questions were: (a) "Would you agree that the government should have the right to prohibit certain groups of persons who disagree with our form of government from holding peaceable public meetings?" (b) "Do you agree that police are unduly hampered in their efforts to apprehend criminals when they have to have a warrant to search a house?" (c) "Do you agree or disagree with the belief that individual liberties and justice under law are not possible in socialist countries?" Students answered each question by checking one of four alternatives ranging from "Strongly agree" to "Strongly disagree." Those who agreed with these statements were called "Conservative," those who disagreed were called "Libertarian."

When the entering freshmen from the thirteen colleges were combined, their answers were distributed in balanced fashion along the entire range of possibilities. Fifteen percent were Conservatives who consistently agreed with all three items, seventeen percent were Libertarians who consistently disagreed, and the rest--sixty eight percent--were "Moderates" whose answers varied. Within single colleges, however, such balanced distributions were rare. At three colleges less than ten percent of the entering students were Conservative and more than forty-five percent were Libertarian; at two other colleges less than ten percent were Libertarian and more than twenty-five percent were Conservative.

Despite these differing proportions of Conservatives, Moderates, and Libertarians attending the diverse types of colleges, when they all were grouped together within each college, net change was usually toward increased liberalism. During the first two years, sixteen of twenty two groups--men and women separately for ten colleges, one sex only for two--became more Libertarian. This change was consistent for all the male groups, and much less consistent for the women. In general, however, the axiom that college students change toward increased liberalism was supported.

But when sub-groups of Moderate Conservatives and Moderate Liberals were examined within each college, the picture became more complicated. Moderate Conservatives--both men and women--became more Libertarian. Sixteen groups were studied and all of them changed in the same direction. Moderate Liberals, in contrast, most often became more conservative; fifteen of twenty two groups changed toward increased conservatism. At only two of the twelve colleges studied did both the male and female groups of Moderate Liberals become more liberal.

These changes are not simply statistical artifacts--"regression effects." All the groups at all the colleges were similar in original scores. If regression toward the mean across colleges were solely operative, second year scores would be quite similar for all groups--somewhat higher for Conservatives and somewhat lower for Libertarians. But this is not the case. Instead, direction and magnitude of change vary from college to college and also vary for men and women. Nor does within-institution regression seem to be a strong force, because at several colleges direction and magnitude of change varies for men and women. These differences across and within colleges argue against regression effects as the principal agents for the changes found.

Briefly, then, studies of change found that (a) net change is toward increased Libertarianism, but change is greater for men and varies in magnitude

from college to college, (b) Moderate Conservatives generally become more liberal, and (c) Moderate Liberals most frequently become more Conservative, but again there is variation in magnitude and at some colleges both men and women become more Liberal.

What characteristics of the colleges were associated with change toward Libertarianism or the lack of it? What forces seem to be at work to accelerate or retard the general tendency toward increasing liberalism? Four major areas were examined: the proportions of students holding liberal or conservative views, selected college goals, institutional "press," and selected measures of student and faculty behavior and experiences.

Research in higher education consistently has found that changes in students' attitudes and values are related to the attitudes and values which predominate for a given campus or for the group with which a student most closely associates. Our findings are no exception. Magnitude of change toward liberalism correlates positively with the proportion of liberal students and negatively with proportion of conservatives.

But what about factors other than peer beliefs? Is change related to institutional goals, perhaps? A College Goals Rating Sheet was completed by faculty and administrators at each college. The relationships between change and goals were consistently non-significant in a statistical sense, but they are worth noting because they presage relationships more firmly supported elsewhere. Increasing liberalism was negatively associated with goals emphasizing the acquisition of a Christian world view, and with goals emphasizing professional-vocational preparation; it was positively associated with goals emphasizing constructive citizenship and an affirmative view of emotions and impulses. Basically, however, even though goals differed sharply among the colleges, these differences bear limited relationship to the direction and magnitude of student change in political liberalism.

The College and University Environment Scales[6] are widely used measures of institutional "press." Based on self-reported student perceptions, they assess the relative emphasis on "Practicality," "Community," "Propriety," "Awareness," and "Scholarship." The strongest and most consistent findings showed increased political liberalism to be negatively associated with Practicality (a practical, instrumental emphasis where procedures, personal status, knowing the right people, and doing what is expected are important) and with Propriety (a polite, cautious, thoughtful environment where group standards of decorum are important). Scholarship reflected a low but consistently positive relationship, and the findings for Awareness and Community were mixed.

The Experience of College Questionnaire yielded more concrete information about academic experiences and behaviors, and student-faculty relationships. Strong and consistently negative relationships were found between change toward

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[6]Educational Testing Service. College and University Environment Scales. Princeton, 1965.

increased liberalism and teaching practices where lectures predominated. Where discussion classes and open arguments among students and between students and teachers occurred frequently, greater change occurred. Where lecturing predominates as a teaching method, memorizing predominates in studying for class, so it was not surprising to find strong negative relationships between memorizing for class and increased liberalism. These findings were consistent with the results when reasons for study were examined. Where "extrinsic" reasons--"To get a good grade." "To finish another requirement toward graduation."--were more often given, change was less. Where "intrinsic" reasons--"To do it because it interested me, I enjoyed it." "To study questions I feel concerned about and want to understand better." "To learn something that will be useful vocationally or in other activities later on." were more often given, change toward liberalism was greater.

Faculty contact--the number of conversations or conferences outside of class lasting more than five minutes; the number of different individual faculty members with whom conversations were held; the number of faculty who know you pretty well and are interested in how you are getting along--also is consistently related to increasing liberalism.

Finally, the frequency with which students have demonstrated against some administrative policy or for some non-college issues, relates positively to increased Libertarianism. The findings are consistent with the positive, albeit low, relationships between such change and the institutional goal, "constructive and creative member of an interdependent society."

In summary, these institutional characteristics are positively associated with increasing Libertarianism: (a) the proportion of peers holding liberal beliefs, (b) study motivated by interests, concerns, or anticipated future activities, (c) student-faculty contact, and (d) demonstrations concerning administrative policies and non-college issues. These institutional characteristics are negatively associated with such change: (a) the proportion of peers holding conservative beliefs, (b) college and student emphasis on professional-vocational preparation and propriety, (c) teaching practices which employ lecturing in class and memorizing for class preparation, (d) study motivated by finishing a requirement or getting a good grade.

These findings concerning differences in inter- and intra-institutional change have both theoretical and practical implications. First, they document once again the principle that the impact of a college depends substantially upon the characteristics of the person who encounters it. At some institutions Moderate Conservatives become more liberal, and Moderate Liberals become more conservative. Institutional impact also varies significantly by sex; sauce for the gander, in many cases, is not sauce for the goose. Of course these ideas are not new. But research and theory in higher education, and educational practices as well, usually ignore fundamental differences among students. It is well to be reminded that they play a major role in determining the consequences of college programs, of the general environment, and of daily experiences thereby generated.

Thus we are taken to more complex levels if the influences of college are to be understood and if educational practices are to be improved. Feldman and

Newcomb posit "accentuation" to describe college impacts: "Whatever the characteristics of an individual that selectively propel him toward particular educational settings--going to a college, selecting a particular one, choosing a certain academic major, acquiring membership in a particular group of peers--those same characteristics are apt to be reinforced and extended by the experiences incurred in those selected settings."[7] The results above suggest that accentuation does not always occur; many Moderate Liberals selected colleges which did not reinforce their position and did not move them further in that direction. Chickering[8] suggests the term "acceleration" to convey the notion of added impetus to changes already underway and to admit the possibility of "deceleration"--some colleges may retard development which would proceed more rapidly elsewhere. These findings demonstrate the thrust toward liberalism generally characteristic of young adults. At all the colleges studied such development proceeds for Moderate Conservatives, and apparently accelerates at some institutions. But at several colleges the consequence for Moderate Liberals is not acceleration, but deceleration, retardation, or change toward more conservative views.

When differences in student-college fit, and subsequent differences in student-college interaction, lead to differential developmental outcomes--which this research and other studies clearly suggests--then evaluation of institutional practice requires identification and study of significant subgroups within each college population and requires study of more particular relationships among institutional characteristics, student characteristics, and student change.

Similarly, if educational practice is to improve, more complex thought and planning is required. Varied repertoires made flexibly available in the light of significant student differences must be developed. But to achieve an appropriate repertoire means surrendering the comforts of tradition and prejudice and assuming the burdens of close analysis, systematic innovation, and careful evaluation.

There also are concrete implications for a college that values increased political liberalism. To foster such change (a) increase the proportion of students who enter with at least moderately liberal beliefs, (b) temper a strongly instrumental atmosphere which emphasizes status and decorum, (c) shift teaching away from heavy reliance on lectures to more frequent discussion classes which permit open exchange among students and between students and teacher, and (d) increase the range and frequency of student-faculty contacts outside of class. If such institutional changes are made, increased student change toward political liberalism is likely to follow.

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[7] K. A. Feldman and T. M. Newcomb, The Impact of College on Students. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1969), p. 333.

[8] A. W. Chickering, Education and Identity, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1969).

Table 1

Change in Percents of Liberals, Moderates,

and Conservatives--All Colleges Combined

	Men N = 213*		Women N = 238**	
	Entering Fall/'65	Second Year Spring/'67	Entering Fall/'65	Second Year Spring/'67
Liberals	18	30	16	21
Moderates	65	58	70	66
Conservatives	16	12	14	13

* $X^2 = 7.6$, $p. < .025$

** $X^2 = 2.0$, non-significant

Table 2
Change in Percents of Liberals (L), Moderates (M), and Conservatives (C)--Individual Colleges

		Men			Women		
Colleges		N	Entrance Fall/'65	Second Year Spring/'67	N	Entrance Fall/'65	Second Year Spring/'67
WJB	L	7	0	14	10	0	10
	M		86	86		60	80
	C		14	0		40	10
Stonewall	L	59	8	14	18	0	11
	M		64	61		67	50
	C		28	25		33	39
Divinity	L	15	20	47	19	11	5
	M		40	33		68	74
	C		40	20		21	21
Savior	L	19	16	26	28	7	7
	M		63	63		79	75
	C		21	11		14	18
Simon	L	36	8	17	35	14	29
	M		81	81		83	57
	C		11	2		3	14
Friendly	L	25	4	12	38	16	5
	M		88	68		71	74
	C		8	20		13	21
Rocket	L	21	10	19			
	M		85	72			
	C		5	10			
Woodbine	L	15	27	47	15	13	33
	M		60	53		74	60
	C		13	0		13	7
Sacred	L				10	10	10
	M					90	70
	C					0	20
Elder	L	22	45	55	22	32	55
	M		50	45		68	45
	C		5	0		0	0
Classic	L	13	46	77	5	60	60
	M		46	23		40	40
	C		8	0		0	0
Kildew	L	12	58	67	12	67	58
	M		33	33		25	42
	C		8	0		8	0

Table 3

Second Year Scores for Moderate Conservatives

(Entrance Score 5.5)

College	N	Men	N	Women
WJB			4	6.50
Divinity	3	7.33	5	6.00
Stonewall	18	6.39	5	6.60
Savior	4	7.75	14	6.64
Simon	11	7.55	4	8.00
Friendly	8	7.13	11	6.36
Rocket (Business)	4	6.25		
Rocket (Engineering)	4	7.25		
Woodbine	4	9.00	2	7.50
Sacred			4	7.50
Classic	2	8.00		

Note: Data available for only one sex at WJB, Rocket, and Sacred.

Table 4

Second Year Scores for Moderate Liberals

(Entrance Score 9.5)

College	N	Men	N	Women
WJB			4	9.00
Divinity	3	10.67	6	7.83
Stonewall	7	7.14	4	9.00
Savior	3	9.00	6	8.50
Simon	7	8.57	5	8.00
Friendly	3	7.50	6	6.83
Rocket (Business)	2	11.00		
Rocket (Engineering)	2	8.00		
Woodbine	6	9.33	4	9.50
Sacred			3	9.00
Elder	12	9.75	10	9.60
Classic	6	11.17	2	9.00
Kildew	3	10.67	4	10.00

Note: Data available for only one sex at WJB, Rocket, and Sacred

Table 5

Increased Liberalism and Proportions of Liberal and Conservative Students

	Percent Increase in Number of				
	Liberals	Moderate Conservatives		Moderate Liberals	
		Men	Women	Men	Women
	N = 12	N = 9	N = 8	N = 11	N = 11
Proportion of Liberals	.58*	.80**	.09	.46	.44
Proportion of Conservatives	.03	.06	-.60	-.48	-.26

Note: N's indicate number of institutions. Figures are Spearman rank order correlation coefficients. * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$

Table 6

Increased Liberalism and Institutional Goals

N = Eleven Institutions

Goal	rho
Educated in the liberal arts within the context of a Christian world view.	-.22
Possesses skills and abilities for future vocation.	-.35
Prepared for future professional activities.	-.06
Constructive and creative member of interdependent society.	.11
Recognizes and accepts feelings as relevant to decisions.	.37

Table 7

Liberalism and CUES Scores

	Increased Liberalism plus Decreased Conservatism	Moderate Conservatives		Moderate Liberals	
		Men	Women	Men	Women
	N = 12	N = 9	N = 8	N = 11	N = 11
Practicality	-.45	-.61*	-.40	-.66*	-.54*
Community	.01	.46	-.36	.03	-.31
Awareness	-.49	.61*	.12	.38	.30
Propriety	-.49	.03	.29	-.56*	-.56*
Scholarship	.46	.38	.20	.22	.02

Note: N's report number of institutions. Figures are Spearman rank order correlation coefficients. * = $p < .05$

Table 8

Increased Liberalism plus Decreased Conservatism and

Characteristics of Students and Colleges

N = Twelve Colleges

Characteristics	rho
Orientation to college--	
Vocational	-.47
Academic	-.16
Collegiate	-.13
Non-conformist	.43
Teaching practices--	
The lectures followed the text book closely	-.64*
Instructor outlined the day's lecture or discussion at the beginning of each class	-.64*
Students argue openly in class	.42
Students argue openly with the instructor	.10
Mental activities studying for courses--	
Memorizing	-.48
Interpreting	.07
Applying	-.11
Analyzing	-.03
Synthesizing	.01
Evaluating	-.11
Reasons for study--	
To get a good grade	-.68*
To finish a requirement	-.33
Interest or enjoyment	.59*
Questions of concern	.65*
Useful vocationally or in other activities later on	.69*
Student-faculty contact--	
Number of conversations outside of class	.73**
Number of different faculty talked with outside of class	.40
Number of faculty who know you and are interested in you.	.10
Demonstrated against administrative policy	.59*
Demonstrated for non-college issue	.43

Note: Figures are Spearman rank order correlation coefficients.

* = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$